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CUSTOMS IN EATING

264 [512] The Tanala family rises at dawn and goes to work at once, to take advantage of the morning coolness. If any food is left from the previous night's meal, there will be a cold breakfast, but no cooking is done at this time. The first regular meal is served a little before noon and the second at sunset. Hospitality is casual and universal. Anyone who is in the house when a meal is ready partakes as a matter of course.

On all ordinary occasions the food is regularly served, not eaten from the pot. The woman of the house spreads a clean mat on the floor near the fireplace and everyone washes his hands and mouth. The woman then dishes out the rice and vegetable foods while the man divides and distributes the meat, if there is any. The husband's rice, and that of honored guests, is served separately, while the woman [554] and children eat from a common dish. In most gentes it is customary to place the dish of the husband or guest on a small stand of basketwork, 1½ to 2 inches high (Fig. 8, f, g, h). This symbolizes his elevation above the rest of the household.

The rice is served first. When a mound of it has been piled on each dish, the woman flattens the top of it with the back of her rice ladle and pours on the other food. The salt and pimento mortars have been placed on the mat and each one seasons his own food with them. The head of the house is served first and no one else can begin eating until he has commenced. Each person has his own spoon and it is considered the height of ill manners to plunge the hands into the common dish. Foods which have to be eaten with the fingers, such as meat, are served separately. Simple forks, made [412] from straight pieces of bone, are sometimes used.

The natives usually eat rapidly and almost in silence. When the food has been consumed, the hands and mouth are washed again and everyone relaxes. They loll about and chat for a half hour or more. The woman gathers up the dishes and throws the scraps of food out of the door, to the chickens. Wooden utensils are washed after each meal and hung up to dry. Spoons, after washing, are placed in small openwork baskets (Fig. 13, f) or thrust through holes in a narrow strip of matting (Fig. 7, j). These spoon holders are usually hung from the center post of the house, above the fireplace. The cooking pots are rarely washed, this being considered a waste of time.

261 The natives have enormous appetites. A Tanala man will eat two to three times as much, by bulk, as a white laborer. They are

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596 Thus, while the village and gens are permanent units, the lineages of which they are composed are constantly dissolving and changing, a given lineage rarely persisting more than four generations.

596 554 The lineage is a direct outgrowth of the family. It has already been said that married sons build their houses close to that of the father and that they and their children are under his control as long as he lives. If the brothers are friendly to each other, as is usually the case, they continue to live together after his death, keeping the family land holdings and cattle herd intact. The eldest son becomes the head of the group, in the father's place. He directs the common activities, settles internal disputes and acts as its representative in councils and minor sacrifices. His position is almost like that of the father and he is shown great respect by the other members. At the same time, he has no legal authority over his brothers or their children and must gain his ends by persuasion. As he usually receives more of the father's property than the younger sons, he is generally the richest member of the group and strengthens his position by gifts and loans to the rest. When he dies, his eldest son succeeds to the leadership and the group holds together until split by some serious internal dispute. The reason for such disputes is usually economic, but jealousy is also important in the third and fourth generations. A rich man who cannot succeed to the leadership of the lineage will often demand his share of the common property and found a new lineage.

The members of each lineage live together in a separate ward within the village. They herd their cattle together and help each other in making the *tavy* ("fields for hill rice"). All contribute to the support of poor and old members and, at funerals, all are assessed according to their wealth. Individual property rights are fully recognized, but there is a good deal of informal communism. Within the limits set by good taste, any member may use the tools, etc., belonging to any other, even in his absence. Food is shared freely. [454] In many cases the members will deposit their money with the head of the lineage, who acts as a sort of banker.

Blood ties between members of the same lineage are felt to be almost as close as those between members of the same family. Men and women use the same terms of relationship for each other as for [582] actual brothers and sisters. Marriage within the lineage, although permitted in some cases, is generally frowned upon.

THE VILLAGE

621 361 Until very recent times, isolated dwellings have been unknown among the Tanala, due to the constant danger of attack. The village

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descendants of inter-gens marriages which had been matrilocal (see The Family), descendants of slave men and free women, etc. Such persons were attached to their mother's lineage. In the case of matrilocal marriages they would keep their father's taboos in the first generation, but if they married into their mother's gens, as was usually the case, their descendants would be considered full gens members. Individuals connected with the gens through female descent were entitled to use of its land and suffered from no disabilities except that they were debarred from a few offices which were strictly hereditary in the male line. The Ikongo paid more attention to male descent than the Menabe and in historic times their gens membership is said to have been strictly based upon it. 618

I believe that residence was originally almost as important as descent in establishing gens membership. Certain gentes mentioned in traditions have completely disappeared and it was explained that, having lost their lands through conquest, they had broken up. Their lineages had settled in the villages of other gentes, by permission, and had finally been absorbed.

Each gens was composed of from one to fifty villages all of which recognized the domination of a single chief. Among the Menabe there was rarely more than one gens represented in a village. Among the Ikongo, lineages belonging to the royal gens often lived in the villages of the other gentes, but this was probably a late development, linked with the rise of royal power in that group. 618 631

SOCIAL CLASSES

Until about one hundred and twenty-five years ago the Menabe recognized only two classes in society: the *hova*, who were free persons belonging to a gens, and the *ndevo*, who were prisoners of war or their descendants. There were no hereditary distinctions among the *hova* although differences in wealth and ability were, of course, recognized. Most of the *ndevo* were slaves. Some distinction was made between slaves who were Tanala by birth and those captured from other tribes. The former would often be ransomed by their relatives and their bondage was, in general, lighter. Marriages between such slaves and free people were quite common, especially if the slave was a member of a good family in his own gens. At death, the body of a Tanala slave would be returned to his own gens for burial in his village tomb, unless his village lay at too great a distance. Slaves, both Tanala and foreign, were further divided into chattel slaves and family slaves. The former were usually prisoners of war, the latter 567 [554]

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rich family. It is the chief of the *kibory* who offers the sacrifices and addresses the prayers to the ancestors." 764

Very little additional information was obtained but this seems to indicate that all the members of a gens do not necessarily use the same *kibory* and I suspect that every village of long standing has one of its own. The office of guardian of the *kibory* also seems to be much less important than among the southeast coast tribes. Early writers say that the Ikongo simply buried their dead in the forest and it seems possible that their use of the *kibory* has been borrowed from the eastern tribes in comparatively recent times. [621]

Informants from the Tanala Menabe say that some of their northern gentes have true gens tombs which are used by as many as ten or twelve villages. Those consist of houses containing stone lined pits with three compartments. The bodies of men are placed in one compartment, those of women in another and those of children in the third. The type would seem to be almost identical with that used by the southeast coast tribes, but informants thought that there was no special guardian of the tomb. They were not sure of this and spoke from hearsay rather than personal knowledge. 764 618

Among the rest of the Menabe each village has two or three tombs which are in simultaneous use. As a rule the corpses are put in the different tombs in rotation, but the village chief or council may also designate the tomb to be used. New tombs may be built either by the village as a whole, when the old ones are in danger of becoming overcrowded, or by individuals. The builder of a tomb acquires prestige and can specify certain things in regard to it, as that it shall be used only for men or that the men's and women's bodies shall be kept separate in it, but its use never seems to be limited to his direct descendants. 764 [621] [554]

The tombs themselves are of three types: natural caves, rock shelters and houses. Caves are used when possible and if a good one is discovered within a reasonable distance of the village the dead are often moved into it. In the case of rock shelters a large box of heavy planks with a plank cover is built under the overhang where it will be protected from the weather. Some of these boxes are said to be very large, with room for a hundred or more bodies. If neither caves nor rock shelters are available, the *kibory* consists of a large rectangular pit lined with dry stone masonry and covered with stone slabs or planks. The earth is heaped above in a mound and a house built over the whole. The *kibory* are always hidden in dense brush at least a half hour's march from the village.

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Although the *ombiasy mpaikidy* may perform certain functions in connection with the cult of the dead, their main activities are in connection with divination, the manufacture of charms, etc. While the priests direct their activities toward placating and controlling Beings, whether Deities or ghosts, the *ombiasy mpaikidy* specialize in forecasting and controlling the operations of Fate. Even when they are in close touch with spirits, they do not control their ghostly advisers, but simply act as their mouthpieces. The controls rarely demand anything for themselves. They simply know what will happen and tell the *ombiasy*.

Ombiasy mpaikidy are divided into *ombiasy ndolo* and *ombiasy nkazo*. The two groups perform identical functions, but derive their magical abilities from different sources.

Ombiasy ndolo (lit. "spirit *ombiasy*") are under the control of some individual ghost, although it seems that a few may have more than one ghostly adviser. The ghost is usually that of an ancestor, commonly one who has himself been an *ombiasy*. The spirit selects the person and notifies him that he has been chosen by a dream or vision. If the person is reluctant to accept the appointment, which is not infrequent, the ghost may desist. However, if it appears a second time and repeats the demand, the person must obey, on pain of death. Apparently the ghost visits the *ombiasy* at will and is dominating rather than dominated. At first it makes its will known through dreams, later, as the *ombiasy* becomes more accustomed to it, it will speak to him while he is awake and engaged in ordinary activities. Apparently some practitioners of this class do have auditory hallucinations and are convinced of the genuineness of the control. The spirits will often notify them in advance when their services will be required, so that they will have the medicine or the charm ready when the person comes to ask for it. They cure the sick, make charms, direct ceremonies, etc., like other *ombiasy*, but most of them do not use mechanical means of divination, relying on their controls for information. Although most of them are considered slightly inferior to the *ombiasy nkazo*, exceptional ones are accorded the highest rank of all by the natives.

Ombiasy nkazo (lit. "wood *ombiasy*") are far more numerous than all the others put together. They do not claim spirit control and, while the others are often nervously or mentally abnormal, they are, with few exceptions, thoroughly normal and above the average in mentality. All those with whom I became personally acquainted showed an unusual degree of shrewdness and common sense and had

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available. It seems to play a relatively unimportant role in the culture of the Menabe and the native attitude toward it is much the same as that toward any other disease. Although the possessed receive much care and attention during the seizure, to be subject to possession decreases rather than increases the prestige of the individual. Even persons who give oracles while possessed are, with few exceptions, rated below the regular ombiasy ("medicine-men"). All informants agreed that a person who was not subject to possession would make no attempt to become so.

There can be little doubt that spirit possession is becoming more frequent at the present time. This is probably due in part to increased contact with tribes who hold the concept. Thus Raindranaivo, my best informant from the Manandriana gens, says that the ceremonial features of possession have been taken over by his gens from the Betsileo, some of whom now live among them, and that the frequency of possession has greatly increased within his adult memory, about fifty years. Emotional stresses resulting from the break-up of the old culture may also play a part, for the epidemic outbreaks of possession among the Imerina occurred at the time when European culture began to make itself felt as a menace.

In both gentes the term *salosaopa* is applied indiscriminately to the malady, the spirit causing it, the person suffering from it (during the time he is possessed), and the ceremony for its cure. The Zafindramanana recognize two types of *salosaopa*, the ordinary one and the *salosaopa ankolova*, in which the possessed gives spirit messages, directions for making medicines, etc., during the seizure.

There seems to be a good deal of confusion about the spirits causing the ordinary *salosaopa*. In general they are regarded as ancestral, but there seems to be no complete agreement on this, or as to whether more than one spirit can possess the same individual at different times. The ordinary *salosaopa* usually does not know who his possessing spirit is. He is seized without warning and will drop whatever he is doing and run toward the village tomb or to some near-by lake or river, where he plunges in. His relatives pursue him and carry him back to the village bodily. Once there, he is released and begins to dance. If the bystanders do not sing and clap, to help him, he falls unconscious and becomes rigid, as though dead. After the victim has danced for a time and begins to show signs of exhaustion, one of his relatives takes the *kotomanga* (see p. 167), scrapes it with the regular invocation, and puts the dust in water. The victim drinks some of this and pours the rest over his head. He recovers

526 both the loser's shoulders touch the ground simultaneously. The wrestlers display more strength than science and apparently there are no named grips. Strangling or striking an opponent is considered unfair, but there are no other fouls and injuries are not uncommon. The bystanders act as umpire and will separate the contestants if they lose their tempers. However, the Tanala seem to have a fairly strong sense of fair play and the loser usually takes his defeat very good-naturedly.

The Tanala Menabe rarely do "catch as catch can" wrestling, preferring two milder forms of the sport. In one of these the contestants stand facing each other, seize each other round the waist, and try to trip each other. In the other, a man stands with his right arm extended and elbow bent, the clenched fist being held in front of his face. His opponent seizes the wrist with both hands and tries to throw him off balance. If he moves his feet, he loses the bout. This sport is also a favorite with the Betsileo. Both these forms of [764] wrestling are indulged in at funerals, but simply as a part of the general jollification.

Boxing is almost unknown, although it is a favorite sport of both the east coast and plateau tribes. In this boxing, blows are delivered with a wide swing, not from the shoulder as with Europeans. Although the fighting looks clumsy, the blows arrive with great force and I have seen both bones of a man's forearm broken in attempting to ward one off. Fighting with the feet, which the Imerina have brought to a fine art, is quite unknown to the Tanala.

Bull baiting should also be mentioned among athletic sports, [554] for it is regularly practiced at funerals and a good bull baiter possesses great prestige. A description of it will be found in the section on Domestic Animals.

541 Watching fighting bulls was a favorite amusement in ancient times, but seems to be rapidly becoming obsolete (see Domestic Animals). As far as I could learn, other animals were rarely pitted against each other. There is no systematic cock fighting here, although it was common among the plateau tribes.

524 There are a few games. Small children play a game with buttons or shells, etc., on a series of irregularly drawn connected rectangles. The pieces represent various members of a family: the husband, wife or wives, and the children. The husband is usually represented by a long, pointed object and the wives by round ones. Each piece represents the same individual throughout the game. The player moves them about the diagram at will, acting out long and com-